



Investigation Division

The Investigation Division consists of three sergeants, ten investigators and two accelerant detection dogs. Operating in three divisions in the State, personnel are assigned as follows. The Northern Division has one sergeant and four investigators assigned. The Central Division has one sergeant and three investigators assigned, and the Southern Division also has one sergeant and three investigators assigned. The accelerant detection dogs are assigned to the Northern and Southern Division with one investigator as primary handler.

State Fire Investigators are sworn law enforcement officers in the State of Maine with major responsibility in conducting investigations of fires and explosions for origin and cause. Fires are classified in one of three ways, accidental, intentional human element, or undetermined, and it is the investigators role to classify an incident accordingly. If it is determined that a fire is an arson (intentional human element), the investigator completes interviews and gathers evidence to determine suspects of the crime of Arson (Class A), under the Maine Criminal Statutes 17-A.

All fire scenes, explosions, and other types of investigations are documented in any of several ways. Photographs (including digital), video tapes, diagrams, and any information obtained are documented in the form of tape recorded interviews, written statements, or a summary of interviews.

The investigators are responsible for investigating all fatal and serious personal injury fires to determine the cause. This is done in an attempt to prevent such fires in the future. The Office of State Fire Marshal is the representative of the Attorney General's Office in the area of fire investigations and explosions.

State Fire Investigators make arrests, write summonses, and conduct administrative and criminal search warrants throughout the investigation process. They interview complainants, suspects, and witnesses to develop information for the case and collect and process evidence from the scene. A casebook is prepared for the District Attorney's Office in the county where the crime occurred. Once all facts of the case are gathered and reviewed, the case is submitted to the local District Attorney for possible prosecution of arson or associated crimes. If the decision is made to prosecute a case, the investigator works closely with the D.A. throughout the Grand Jury process and during the trial, assisting them with any details as needed for court preparation and presentation. Investigators must qualify as an expert witness in the area of fire science in a court of law in each case in which they participate. In addition, many cases that are investigated by the Fire Marshal's Office are linked to other crimes such as fraud and homicide.

Additional responsibilities include conducting fireworks inspections, processing complaints, investigation of accidents, training fire and police departments in basic fire investigation techniques, utilizing accelerant detection K-9's at fire scenes, training and caring for K-9's, and attending many speaking engagements.

Because of the varied types of fire investigations, the investigators work daily with members of all types of professions, including attorneys, doctors, financial administrators, banks and other financial institutions, all law enforcement agencies, and fire departments throughout the State of Maine. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in place that between the Office of State Fire Marshal,

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), and Maine State Police Bomb Team and Evidence Response Team that creates the Maine State Joint Arson/Explosive Task Force. The goal of this task force is to develop a cooperative effort between all participants charged with the investigation and prosecution of criminal offenses committed within the State of Maine and involving the criminal destruction of property by means of fire or explosives.

During 2004, the Investigation Division responded to 548 fire incidents. This agency also investigated 18 incidents involving Improvised Explosive Devices and 17 incidents involving Improvised Incendiary Devices.

The investigation activity by county were as follows:

Androscoggin	40	Aroostook	24
Cumberland	77	Franklin	18
Hancock	19	Kennebec	34
Knox	16	Lincoln	15
Oxford	35	Penobscot	94
Piscataquis	21	Sagadahoc	14
Somerset	23	Waldo	17
Washington	24	York	76